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ISSUE 234
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Canada
TLC The Land Conservancy BRITISH COLUMBIA'S NATIONAL TRUST

newcommonground *by design*

Our newly designed magazine went to press on the winter solstice during the first full moon eclipse in centuries. The next morning I heard a knock on the door and woke up. Bleary-eyed, after working very late into the wee small hours of the post solstice dawn, I scanned my digital watch, thinking it was about 9:00 AM but instead the numbers were exactly 11:11. With the joy of a new day, I shouted out "It's the first day …all things are possible!" to my daughter who had just arrived home from the night after her grad reunion. Repeating the phrase all things are possible with my arms extended with the V signs on both hands, I noticed my V'd fingers implied V + V, the Roman Numerals which equal X, a perfect 10. The end and beginning of our ten digit numbering system, the Alpha of winter and Omega of spring. From a different optic, the digits 11:11 mimicked my four fingers. Eat, pray, love and give thanks for solstice, for Christmas, for New Year's, for humanity, for peace and understanding, for this amazing life.

The redesigned Common Ground you are reading evolved over months, a creative gestation that gave birth with the turn of the solar year. Rebirthing Common Ground during this auspicious natural cycle, with the longest nights giving way to the return of light. How art, and everything else we do, including publishing Common Ground, reflects this life force.

Our fresh redesign was printed on time for 2011's solar New Year for western culture and prior to the lunar February 3, 2011 Chinese New Year of the Rabbit, considered the luckiest of all the 12 signs.

January is a good month for beginnings. Named after Janus (Ianuarius) the god of the doorway. Janus's name began in Roman mythology, rooted in the Latin word for door (ianua). January is literally the door to the year.

Through celebrating these wonderful dates we reconnect with our essence, once again recommitting to serve each other with love and discovering our highest purpose. Like the song *Simple Gifts* written by Elder Joseph Brackett at a Shaker community in 1848:

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

The song returned in 1944 with Aaron Copland's score for Martha Graham's ballet *Appalachian Spring.* Simple Gifts' melody wove its way into many new forms including the 1996 musical *Lord of the Dance*, and, the 2009 inauguration of Barack Obama. It just keeps on turning up.

The look of Common Ground's new logo embodies a new feeling. The letter "n" of Common and the "d" of Ground join. The font is clean, clear and current. A new look to inspire closeness, consciousness, cooperation and community while representing the interconnection of all things.

The line in our logo underlines how we all stand on and emerge from the same source. Individually, our lifeline, our silver cord that connects us to the source of all… some call God, Goddess, Universe, Creator, Source, the quantum field or where we deeply find common ground.

A line is an infinite series of dots. Hopefully Common Ground will help connect the dots for the bigger picture while underscoring what is truly important for conscious communities to flourish.

The lower case letters of our new logo represent the need to have a sense of true humility, grounded in our being. Here we are together, no one higher or lower, all equal. So lets lend a hand to hold the line for clarity, fairness, peace and beauty. We're all in this together.

The line represents a plane of existence on its side cutting through illusions. Like a mirror reflects a raising of consciousness that our imagination has stepped through like the children into the *The 10th Kingdom* or *Narnia* where they found the courage to live their truth after they stepped back into their schoolyard to protect their fellow schoolmates from the bullies. There are a lot of greedy global bullies out there demanding austerity from people all around the world, while they play hog in trough.

This line also represents the inner mirror of our souls where we can reflect on the events of the day or who we are. Michael Jackson pointed to this when he sang "I'm starting with the man in the mirror, I'm asking him to change his ways, and no message could have been any clearer, if you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change" We open our hearts and minds to learn what we need to know. So we can better understand what is really happening to the economy and ecology, to culture and community, to music and beauty, to media and politics, to family and relationships and to the universe and ourselves.

We publish because it is very important to know what is going on now. People need to have access to your great ideas, products, service and events. In order to create a healthy world community, a healthy ecology, and to be healthy people through the process, it requires that we keep learning how to be more fully engaged in the excitement of this moment as we create our culture and history.

We can't have peace without justice. And to have social justice we need integrity, honesty, compassion, clarity, health, equality, fraternity, liberty, freedom, and good information leading us to skilful action. This is the common ground we publish from, and we are ready for the exciting times ahead.

"To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour" – William Blake.

This is the potential we are living today. All intimate and important aspects of our lives, from health to personal growth, to spirituality and social justice, all require wisdom, love and attention. Common Ground is here to nourish these.

We welcome 2011 with our renewed intent for conscious community, and, for our part we are enthusiastic to serve you through our newly designed Common Ground magazine.

John Lennon sang "You may say that I'm a dreamer, But I'm not the only one, I hope someday you'll join us, And the world will live as one." The Secret Lantern Society are a glowing example of community by hosting a meditative Labyrinth of Light twinkling with 700 bees wax candles. Labyrinths have long been used for meditation, prayer and ritual in various cultures around the world. Their winter solstice labyrinth offered me the space in timelessness to release old attachments and envision new possibilities as the darkest night of the year births a new season.

Remember to make your New Year's resolutions come true. Hold on to your dreams. Connect with and cherish your loved ones, which includes yourself as well. "To turn, turn will be our delight, Till by turning, turning we come round right."

Sincerely,
Joseph Roberts,
Publisher Common Ground

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– Marshall McLuhan

Next time you find yourself relaxing and pondering that age-old question "What are my chances of dying of a heart attack in the next 10 years?" you can rest assured there are many intelligent and well-meaning people working on this problem.

Trying to figure out my risks is similar to medical screening, which is all about seeking out illness before it strikes us down. Some forms of screening are quite subtle and many of us won't even know we're being screened for signs of "risk" for disease almost every time we visit our doctor.

When your doctor takes your blood pressure, asks if you still smoke or sends you for a cholesterol test, she is, in fact, gathering information to help gauge your particular state of cardiovascular health. She may not tell you this information can be used to calculate the probability of your having a heart attack or stroke somewhere in the next five or 10 years (what is commonly called "risk assessment"), but you should know a little bit about how that information can be used.

There are many different types of risk calculation tools, but at the heart of all of them are simple logarithms that provide a probability of having a heart attack, stroke or a range of stroke-like events based upon the reality of your current life. If you can answer questions like: "How old are you? Do you have untreated high blood pressure? Do you smoke? What are your cholesterol levels and "Do you have diabetes?" you can determine on your own your five or 10-year risk of having a cardiovascular "event" – i.e. a heart attack or stroke.

The risk percentages they provide are often misinterpreted and laughable with regard to their alleged precision and exaggerated in a way that may scare the bejeesus out of you.

Almost all risk calculators start from the same place: Framingham, Massachusetts (pop. 66,910), a little town 20 miles west of Boston where, in 1948, medical researchers enrolled 5,000 willing Framingham citizens and measured and recorded their lives for years. The now famous Framingham Heart Study has since morphed and grown and it's now computing health statistics based on its third generation of participants.

You might want to try to experiment with a Framingham risk calculator by Googling it. I found one at www.bodyandhealth.canada.com that promised to predict my 10-year risk of having a heart attack or dying from heart disease.

I plugged in the following values: Age? 47. Diabetes? No. Smoking? No. Systolic blood pressure (treated and untreated)? 120 (about normal). Total cholesterol: 3.0 mmol/L (This was a guess, I have no idea so I picked a value in the middle.) HDL cholesterol? 1.0 mmol/L (Again, a number between high and low.) Then I hit the "Calculate" button. My total risk? 5.6 percent.

These "risk calculators," as they are sometimes called, are not without their problems. The risk percentages they provide are often misinterpreted and laughable with regard to their alleged precision and exaggerated in a way that may scare the bejeesus out of you. At the end of the day, like any tool in medicine, a risk calculator has the potential to do harm as well as good, even when employed with the best of intentions.

If you now find yourself pondering that second age-old question "Why bother with all that crap?" you're probably like me and the thought of gazing into a medical crystal ball to find you've got a 5.6 percent chance of dying from a heart

Well-known risk calculation tool overused and misinterpreted

attack seems about as useful as your daily horoscope reading.

Having said that, let's assume there are some important health messages out there that could guide our lives and that we might learn something from a tool that could help calculate our future probabilities of disease.

You could call my 5.6 percent my "baseline risk," meaning that out of 100 men like me, about six of us, over the next 10 years, will develop heart disease or die from a heart attack. Another way to say this is 94 out of 100 men like me, in the next 10 years, WON'T die from a heart attack (though something else might get them). Then I started to play around with the calculator. I changed a single parameter (and left the others alone) to see how much my risk would change. This is eye-opening stuff.

Age: 87. Risk? 18.4% Change? 12.8%
Smoker? Yes. Risk? 11.2%. Change? 5.6%
Diabetic? Yes. Risk? 7.9%. Change? 2.4%.
Total cholesterol? Off the charts: (7.21 mmol/L) Risk? 9.4%. Change? 3.8%
Systolic blood pressure? 200. Risk: 7.9%. Change? 2.3%.

Excuse all the numbers, but the bottom line is that the biggest risk factors are age and smoking. It's understandable that, if I were 87 and not 47, my risk of dying would increase by nearly 13 percent from where it is now. If I were a smoker, my risk would increase about six percent and so on. The things that make the least difference are whether or not I am a diabetic, or have high cholesterol or high blood pressure. In fact, on their own, these effects add between two and four percent to my normal risk. Hardly worth a trip to the pharmacy in my eyes. But what do we in the medical world obsess about? That's right – blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol – the things which have the least impact on our overall risk.

I called an expert, James McCormack, a doctor of Pharmacy at UBC and a guy who knows a thing or two about risk calculators, seeing as he teaches physicians and medical students about them. He has a unique perspective of these calculators even though he's never plugged in his own numbers.

He asserts that, for starters, people should only calculate their risk if the answer they get would change how they live so as to reduce that risk. I ask James, "Why even bother teaching people about the Framingham risk calculator?"

"The only reason for doing it is so people don't get freaked out by a bit of blood pressure or cholesterol. It's really for education, but also some people, if they knew their numbers, might do something differently than they do now," he explains.

Framingham calculations have many limitations. One of them is that people become too obsessed with their numbers. If your blood pressure is off-the-charts, that information might change what you do. If your cholesterol is super high, just see what dropping it down a bit does to your overall risk. Regardless of whether your risk is five percent or 45 percent, the basic advice doesn't change: stop smoking, exercise and eat better.

I am tempted to ask the obvious questions: "What is the impact of medicine's widespread enthusiasm for risk calculators? How do they measure up against no risk assessment at all?"

No one really knows; that study has not been done. Are we sure that we are using risk calculators in ways that aren't harmful to people. No we're not.

Risk calculators are certainly good for those who want us to take pills to chemically alter our numbers, but perhaps that is the most puzzling thing of all. Many of us take blood pressure or cholesterol-lowering drugs when these calculators show those things to be relatively insignificant in our overall risk of having a heart attack or stroke. You can put a nice frame around that fact, but it won't change things a whole lot.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria and is currently working on a book on medical screening.

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newsbites

A victory for the salmon

Paddlers: We did it! Your paddle, your voice, your footsteps across the Burrard Street Bridge, your smiling face in the rain and your work behind the scenes to make sure we spoke as one powerful voice demanding disease data be released was worth it. On December 9, it was announced that Justice Cohen ordered 10 years of disease data from 120 farms. Originally it was only five years from only 21 farms. Our voices were heard.

We still have a lot of hard work to do together ahead of us, but this is a great start. Let's spread the word to other salmon people who support this and keep applying pressure. This is a moment of victory and hopefully, with this new data, the farms are on their way out.

If you are just itching to do something today, feel free to visit, phone, email or write to your local MP or MLA and the prime minister and tell them just what you think of fish farms. This link has some great examples: http://salmonaresacred.org/forum-post/who-direct-letters

Source: salmonaresacred.org

Cancun agreements point at progress

It's not something you hear often when it comes to climate negotiations: "Progress has been made." The agreements that came out of Cancun won't be enough to get the world back to 350, but they offer a glimpse at a path forward that just might. The feeling of momentum emerging from Cancun was refreshing: countries rebuilt trust, and wrestled with difficult issues like deforestation and transparency. This trust was in serious doubt after last year's failed negations in Copenhagen and even in the final hours of negotiations in Cancun.

These countries will now have to negotiate with the world's climate and the physics and chemistry that govern the climate won't negotiate. In the wake of the modest progress achieved in Cancun, it's tempting to overlook the fact that delegates mostly avoided the real crux of the negotiations: exactly how much will countries reduce their planet-heating emissions?

In fact, the current pledges contained in the negotiating text are still grossly inadequate, leaving the planet on a crash course with at least four degrees Celsius of temperature rise –a terrifying prospect that would put us closer to 750ppm than 350ppm. That's very far from where we must be and that gap won't be fixed by simply waiting until next year's convention in Durban, South Africa.

To close the gap between scientific necessity and political possibility, we must fight the influence of big polluters on the political process. By building a public movement around the climate solutions that science and justice demand, we've helped keep this process alive when major polluters tried to destroy it. We've made the science clear. And thanks to your messages of solidarity, we've strengthened the voices of vulnerable nations, who have pledged to keep the fight for bold climate action alive.

In the months and years to come, that will continue to be our fight as well. In the final hours of the talks in Cancun, members of the 350.org team were among a group of young people who stood peacefully at the entrance to the negotiating halls and slowly counted upwards towards 21,000, the number of deaths attributed (http://www.350.org/en/21000) to climate-related disasters in the first nine months of this year. After two weeks of abstract negotiations, this event was a poignant reminder of the stakes in this struggle and of the strength of the bonds of this global network.

Source: May Boeve for the 350.org Team

Class-action suit over open net-cage salmon farming

A British Columbia First Nation has won the right to launch a class-action lawsuit over damage to wild salmon stocks related to salmon farms in the Broughton Archipelago. Achieving "Certification" is an important milestone for

the advancement of the Kwicksutaineuk/Ah-Kwa-Mish First Nation's (KAFN) class-action lawsuit against the BC government for devastation of their aboriginal fishing rights allegedly caused by open net-cage salmon farming in their Territories. The KAFN lawsuit was launched on February 4th, 2009.

The wild salmon are fundamental to the cultural and spiritual integrity of the aboriginal people in the Broughton Archipelago and to the ecological integrity of their Territory. When juvenile pink and chum salmon migrate out to the open ocean, they must run a gauntlet of open net-cage salmon farms, densely stocked with Atlantic salmon, which are breeding grounds for parasitic sea lice and disease.

There is an ever-increasing urgency to seek solutions and the aboriginal people in the Broughton Archipelago hope and trust that the provincial and federal governments will work with them to resolve this crisis and the class-action.

The latest environmental media advisories and releases through RSS http://feeds.feedburner.com/Huffstrategy

New Promising Treatment for Parkinson's Disease

Botanical compound stimulates stem cells in neurological condition

Janet Thompson was having trouble brushing her teeth in the morning then she started having occasional tremors in her right hand. Not knowing what problem she had, she was referred to a neurologist that diagnosed her as having Parkinson's Disease. When she heard she had the disease she was devastated. She described what she felt as "I almost collapsed when I heard my diagnosis."

She became overwhelmed at the thought of not being able to live and function normally again. Worst, she would be seen in public as being handicapped, which created a tremendous insecurity for her and it didn't help her ability to function.

Parkinson's Disease is characterized by a loss of motor function that may include tremors, muscle rigidity, and postural instability. This disease is largely attributed to degeneration and death of nerve cells in a specific area of the brain called the substantia nigra, which is responsible for producing a neurotransmitter called dopamine.

Multiple mechanisms may be responsible for this loss of dopamine. But promising therapies have shown tremendous improvements in Parkinson's patients. Aside from the typical treatment of levodopa, dopamine agonists, and others, stem cell stimulation and differentiation into neuronal cells are other avenues researchers and doctors have quickly looked towards a cure for this disease.

"After doing my research and finding cures to my disease, I found ginseng saponins to be quite effective for my condition. I no longer have my tremors!" states Janet Thompson.

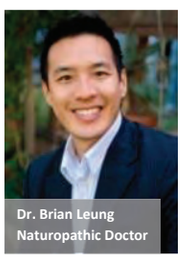
At Last, Some Great News!

With current bio-technology advances, ginseng saponins were extracted from ginseng and discovered to contain a stimulating factor for stem cell growth as one of its many functions along with being able to pass through the blood brain barrier. "When cultured in a medium containing ginseng saponins, neuronal stem cells actively proliferate," states chief scientist Johnny Chu, PhD, MD.

Ginseng saponins can stimulate neuronal stem cells to replace the dying neurons in hippocampal gyrus of normal or ischemic cerebrum, and they may induce differentiation of stem cells into neurons, astrocytes and glial cells. Therefore, cerebral function can be restored.

Only one company in the world contains a specialized patent to extract the saponins from ginseng in a highly concentrated form, called HS-CSF. The official clinic administering proprietary therapies containing HS-CSF is located in the lower mainland (Richmond) – **Careseng Naturopathic Medical Centre (CNMC)**.

"We have been actively using this innovative agent as an herbal stem cell stimulating factor in over 15,000 cases. Ginseng saponins have been proved through clinical trials that it remarkably improves the multiplication of stem cells, and more importantly, it is safer and more effective when compared with other pharmaceutical drugs," states Dr. Brian Leung, ND (President and Clinic Director of CNMC).



Dr. Brian Leung
Naturopathic Doctor

The proprietary extract of this ginseng saponin, an herbal stem cell stimulating growth factor, is considered to be a milestone in the field of stem cell research of natural herbal medicines.

To find out if you qualify for their treatments, call 604-270-7775. Careseng Naturopathic Medical Centre is located at Unit #150, 13260 Delf Pl., Richmond, BC. Only for a limited time they are offering a free 15 minute consultation. **Expires 01/31/11.**

"Having Parkinson's really caused me to stay at home and be afraid of going out in public. I eventually had depression, but after getting treated by Careseng, I'm back to being able to take my walks without fear."
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Journal of TCM. 2007; 32(13):1310-3 ; Yao Xue Xue Bao. 2003; 38(10):735-8); Neurol Res. 2007;29(3):270-3 ; Neurol Res. 2004; 26(4):422-8; J Nat Prod. 2007 Aug; 70(8):1329-34.; Acta Pharmacol Sin. 2005; 26(2):143-9.; *Patient names were recreated for the production of this article.

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healthbites

Rosemary is good for your health

Rosemary is used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. The rosemary plant is native to the Mediterranean area, but it is found in other regions such as France and even as far south as South Africa. The plant itself is an evergreen and has leaves that resemble the needles of an evergreen tree. The rosemary plant has leaves that are thick and leather-like in appearance, accented with blooms, which can be blue, white, pink or purple in colour. Another feature of the rosemary plant is its very aromatic smell and the woolly white substance that can be found on the underside of the leaves. The rosemary plant can reach heights of over five feet. The name rosemary is Latin for "dew of the sea" because the plant is often found growing near water.

Cranberries: Evergreen and for ever healthy

Thoughts of the cranberry probably bring forth memories of Ocean Spray commercials or circular slices of the jellied variety adorning a Thanksgiving platter, yet cranberries are one of the most healthful and multifarious fruit available. Found and grown in bogs throughout the northern hemisphere, cranberries are actually a type of evergreen dwarf shrubs or trailing vines. With skinny, wire-like stems and dark pink flowers, they are popular with the honeybee and anyone who likes a sweet fruit with an acidic kick.

In Canada, cranberries are a major commercial crop. They can be made into cranberry juice (hence the images of the Ocean Spray commercials), cranberry sauce, cranberry jelly or dried into candy-like treats, although many people enjoy them fresh.

Cranberries have been increasingly recognized as a super fruit, along with the Acai berry and blueberry, among others, because of their antioxidant and nutrient content.

Vitamins that help improve vision

Eyesight degeneration is something that naturally happens to everyone during the process of aging. Prescription or over-the-counter treatments can help slow or remedy this process and laser eye surgery has been increasing in popularity recently, but there are less expensive ways to prevent or even reverse sight loss. One way is to ensure that you consume specific vitamins through certain foods and by supplementing your diet with vitamins if necessary.

Refocusing your eyes at regular intervals, wearing sunglasses and refraining from unnecessarily straining your eyes are ways to keep them healthy, but proper nutrition is also key.

The different parts of the eye and specifically the retina, the macula and the lens all require a range of different nutrients to function properly.

The primary vitamins necessary for maintaining good eyesight are A, C and E. Vitamin A improves vision during the nighttime and in low-light. A concentrated amount of vitamin A can be found in carrots, spinach, broccoli, sweet potatoes, squash, eggs, cheese and butter. Vitamin C, an antioxidant that aids the prevention of cataracts, can be found in most fruits.

Lutein, found in many green vegetables and eggs, is important to preventing macular degeneration. Lutein is one of many types of cartenoids that can be found in vegetables, all of which help preserve eye health. Aside from fighting cataract development, lutein also slows macular degeneration in the eye that happens normally through aging.

For retinal health, omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil play an important role. One particular omega-3 fatty acid known as DHA has been found to improve colour and depth perception. These oils can be integrated into any diet either by eating fish or by taking fish oil supplements.

Source: healthtips101.com

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not *so* happy *meals*

Over a 15-year period, studies show a dramatic increase in the number of overweight (tripled) and obese (quadrupled) Canadian children. (1) In the US, which has similar statistics, the Centers for Disease Control states that one child in three born since the year 2000 will develop diabetes during his or her lifetime. In many families, even young children consume too many calories, too much fat and far too much sodium. Studies show that at one to three years of age, sodium intakes averaged close to 2,000 mg a day (double the recommended level). Among four to eight-year-olds, the average daily sodium intake was 2,700 mg and 93 percent consumed more than the upper limit. Trans fats are harmful and, young or old, we have no need for dietary cholesterol.

	Calories	**Fat** grams (g)	**Sodium** milligrams (mg)
Day's Recommended Intake (Calories vary with activity)	Age 2-3 yrs: 1166 gradual increase to age 19 years: female: 2000 male: 2600	Upper limit: Age 2 yrs: 39 g; gradual increase to age 19 years: female 71 g or male 88 g	Age 1-3 yrs: 1000 mg Age 4 to 8 yrs: 1200 mg Over 9 yrs: 1500 mg
McDonald's Mighty Kids Meal: Double cheeseburger, fries, low fat choc. milk	840	37 g (14 g saturated; 1.5 g trans; 85 mg cholesterol)	1460
Wendy's Kids' Meal: Chicken sandwich, fries, small chocolate Frosty	860	32 g (10 g saturated; 0.5 g trans; 55 mg cholesterol)	1210
KFC Kids Meal: Popcorn chicken, potato wedges, string cheese, small Pepsi	800	34.5 (7.5 saturated; 0.3 g trans; 65 cholesterol	1800
A&W Kids Meal: Cheeseburger, fries, soda pop	780	29 g (9 g saturated; 0.4 g trans; 70 mg cholesterol)	1360
2 Bean Burritos (recipe below) with avocado, lettuce, tomato	461	17 g (3 g saturated; 0 g trans; 0 mg cholesterol)	459

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Bean Burritos

Makes 4 burritos

Children need about 15 g of protein at two years, gradually increasing to 50 g for females or 58 g for males at 19 years. A serving of two of these quick-to-make roll-ups provides 20 grams of protein. They are good for lunch (even in a lunchbox), as an after school snack or for supper.

THE WRAPS

4 wheat or corn tortillas or chapatis

THE BEAN FILLING

2 cups cooked pinto beans (or drained 15-ounce can)

2/3 cup tomato sauce

1/3 cup finely chopped red or green bell pepper

1 tsp. chili powder

1/4 tsp. each: garlic powder, oregano, cumin

TOPPINGS

(optional)

Chopped avocado, lettuce, tomato, olives, onion

Warm the wraps in a dry skillet, if desired. Keep them warm by stacking and wrapping them in a clean kitchen towel. Put the beans, tomato sauce, bell pepper and seasonings into a pan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for five minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and mash beans with a fork or potato masher. Place one-quarter of the bean filling onto each wrap, placing it in a strip along one side, slightly off-centre. Add your favourite toppings and roll the wrap around the filling.

Vesanto Melina is a local dietitian and co-author of well-loved nutrition classics, including **Raising Vegetarian Children** (source of Burrito recipe) and the **Food Allergy Survival Guide**. For consultations, please call 604-882-6782 or visit Vesanto's web site www.nutrispeak.com

Enlightened agriculture

It is evident that globalization is not working well when it comes to feeding people. Last year, the number of hungry people in the world topped one billion, which means that, under the current system of industrialized agribusiness, one in six people are going without food. Not to mention that the safety and nutritional quality of the food supplied is being questioned due to all the medical ramifications of eating it.

How different it could look if, instead of treating food as a commodity, we adopted an "Enlightened Agriculture" system, as outlined in Feeding People is Easy by Colin Tudge (www.paripublishing.com). Tudge notes that small-scale systems of diversified food production guard the safety and quality of food, while ensuring a healthy lifestyle that is not rooted in injustice and poverty for others.

Rather than the present monoculture scale of production, smaller scale farmers would join together to form cooperatives to meet distribution and marketing requirements. Countries would continue to benefit from the fair trade export of foods – grains and legumes from temperate climates and mangoes, avocadoes and coffee from tropical countries – but only after the people who live in those countries are fed first.

Another benefit of "Enlightened Agriculture" is the renaissance of all the various skills and crafts employed in our going back to basics. Traditions of wine-making, beekeeping, sewing, weaving, cheese making, cooking and preserving would be resurrected. Imagine how a simple paradigm shift like this could return us to a culture that slows life down from the frantic, overwhelming pace of modern life. I can't wait.

Going back to the land to grow food begins and ends with seeds. Without a secure source of seeds (and water), there can be no such thing as sustainable agriculture. What better month to start planning your garden than January and there's no better place to start than by checking out www.seeds.ca/ev/events.php to see if there is a Seedy Saturday in your area. Last year, 100 Seedy Saturday shows were hosted across Canada, with people coming out to share their seeds through community seed exchanges. Halls were packed full of local seed savers and farmers. At Seedy Saturday, you can find local, organic, open-pollinated varieties of seed that can be saved.

The fact that Seedy Saturday shows are springing up in so many communities shows that people understand the current threat to global food production and their own local food security. (Russia stopped exporting wheat this year due to extreme heat in the mid-40s that caused fires to burn down their wheat fields).

If we intend to feed ourselves by growing more food, we'll need varieties of seed that produce maximum yields for home-grown food production and which can withstand the vagaries of ever changing climate conditions. The best seeds to start with are those that have become adapted to regional conditions, which is why we'll have a much better chance at success if we create local seed banks in our communities. *Happy enlightened New Year.*

Carolyn Herriot is author of **A Year on the Garden Path, a 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide** and **The Zero Mile Diet, a Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing). She grows 'Seeds of Victoria' at The Garden Path Centre in Victoria, BC. www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath/

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2012

an opportunity for change

All of the question marks around the subject "2012" can be useful as a focusing lens or "a litmus test for consciousness," as author Mark Heley proposes. Instead of fixating on any future event, we need to realize that any positive transformation, whether in 2012 or after, will only be the result of deliberate actions and conscious choices made by human beings in the present.

We find ourselves in a window of opportunity where we either radically change our direction as a species or face devastating consequences. We are at that threshold where, as the social ecologist Murray Bookchin put it, our world "will either undergo revolutionary changes, so far-reaching in character that humanity will totally transform its social relations and its very conception of life, or it will suffer an apocalypse that may well end humanity's tenure on the planet." Examining trends in climate change and species extinction, the esteemed scientist James Lovelock, who developed the Gaia Hypothesis, now thinks there could be only 150 million people (not six billion) left alive at the end of this century. Other scientists share his ominous outlook.

If the outlook from a purely empirical perspective looks bleak, the good news

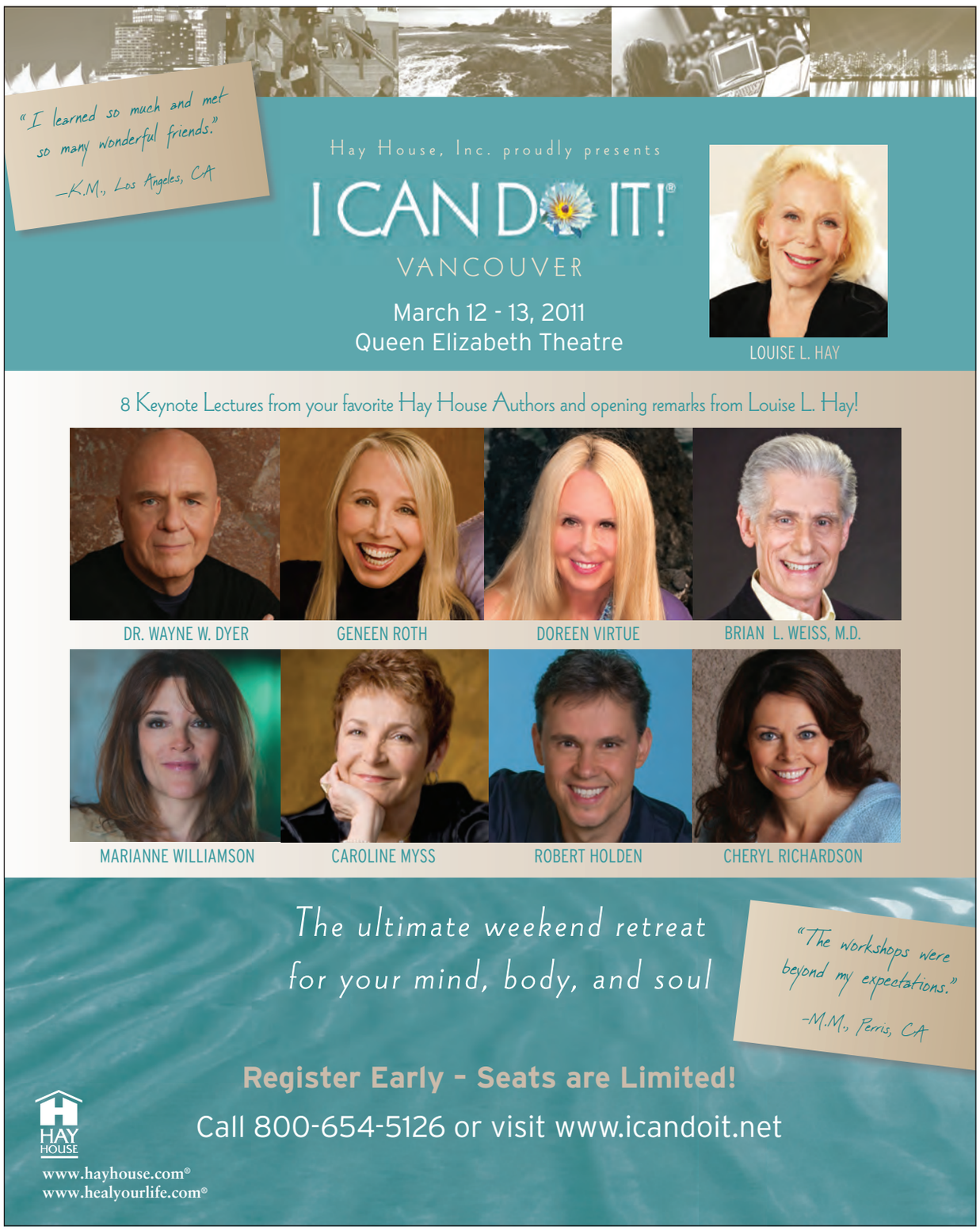
If the human species wants to survive, the civilization that replaces this one is going to have a different set of values and a revamped operating system.

is that science has ignored some crucial factors. One is the possibility that human beings, through an evolution of consciousness, could develop a regenerative culture that contributes to the health of the biosphere. In the 1960s, the design scientist Buckminster Fuller proposed that society could be redesigned to be "comprehensively successful" for everyone on earth. In the short term, we could become far more flexible and resilient, instituting a global program that re-localizes basic essentials, such as growing food, producing energy, making clothes and shelter, while liberating knowledge as a free resource and commonwealth. We could replace money, as a basic instrument, by new systems for exchanging value that support collaboration and trust over competition and self-interest.

The possibility for a rapid regeneration of human culture is predicated on a great awakening happening quickly – before ecological meltdown leads to systemic breakdown. Spiritual realization needs to be integrated with social commitment and direct action. Since the biosphere is now directly threatened by our post-industrial civilization, retreat from society is no longer possible or desirable. Our current culture enshrines irresponsibility greed and waste. If the human species wants to survive, the civilization that replaces this one is going to have a different set of values and a revamped operating system.

While it is conceivable that 2012 may see some sudden shift in human consciousness or an alien landing on the White House lawn, it is more possible that we have a much longer struggle ahead of us. In that case, the end of the Long Count may still be significant as the hinge of a transition in our species' awareness. An ever-growing segment of humanity is becoming conscious of the culture of domination that has degraded the biosphere, annihilated local cultures, and locked us in a prison of constricted awareness. As more and more of us realize this, we will unify our intention to undertake the difficult work of superseding it.

Daniel Pinchbeck is author of **2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl** (Tarcher/Penguin, 2006) and **Breaking Open the Head** (Broadway Books, 2002) and editorial director of www.realitysandwich.com. He appears in the film **2012: Time for Change** which is available for purchase at www.2012timeforchange.com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Temporary roles

If you are awake enough, aware enough, to be able to observe how you interact with other people, you may detect subtle changes in your speech, attitude and behaviour depending on the person you are interacting with. At first, it may be easier to observe this in others; then you may also detect it in yourself. The way in which you speak to the chairman of the company may be different in subtle ways from how you speak to the janitor. How you speak to a child may be different from how you speak to an adult. Why is that? You are playing roles. You are not yourself, neither with the chairman nor with the janitor or the child.

When you walk into a store to buy something, when you go to a restaurant, the bank, the post office, you may find yourself slipping into pre-established social roles. You become a customer and speak and act as such. And you may be treated by the salesperson or waiter, who is also playing a role, as a customer. A range of conditioned patterns of behaviour comes into effect between two human beings that determines the nature of the interaction. Instead of human beings, conceptual mental images are interacting with each other. The more identified people are with their respective roles, the more inauthentic the relationships become.

You have a mental image not only of who the other person is, but also of who you are, especially in relation to the person you are interacting with. So you are not relating with that person at all, but who you think you are is relating to who you think the other person is and vice versa. The conceptual image your mind has made of yourself is relating to its own creation, which is the conceptual image it has made of the other person. The other person's mind has probably done the same so every egoic interaction between two people is in reality the interaction between four conceptual mind-made identities that are ultimately fictions. It is, therefore, not surprising there is so much conflict in relationships. There is no true relationship.

The monk with sweaty palms

Kasan, a Zen teacher and monk, was to officiate at a funeral of a famous nobleman. As he stood there waiting for the governor of the province and other lords and ladies to arrive, he noticed that the palms of his hands were sweaty. The next day he called his disciples together and confessed he was not yet ready to be a true teacher. He explained to them that he still lacked the sameness of bearing before all human beings, whether beggar or king. He was still unable to look through social roles and conceptual identities and see the sameness of being in every human. He then left and became the pupil of another master. He returned to his former disciples eight years later, enlightened.

Happiness as a role vs. true happiness

"How are you?" "Just great. Couldn't be better." True or false? In many cases, happiness is a role people play and behind the smiling façade, there is a great deal of pain. Depression, breakdowns and overreactions are common when unhappiness is covered up behind a smiling exterior and brilliant white teeth, when there is denial, sometimes even to one's self, that there is much unhappiness.

"Just fine" is a role the ego plays more commonly in [North] America than in certain other countries where being and looking miserable is almost the norm and therefore more socially acceptable. It is probably an exaggeration, but I am told that, in the capital of one Nordic country, you run the risk of being arrested for drunken behaviour if you smile at strangers in the street.

If there is unhappiness in you, first you need to acknowledge that it is there. But don't say, "I'm unhappy." Unhappiness has nothing to do with who you are. Say: "There is unhappiness in me." Then investigate it. A situation you find yourself in may have something to do with it.

Action may be required to change the situation or remove yourself from it. If

Don't seek happiness.
If you seek it, you won't find it because seeking is the antithesis of happiness.
Happiness is ever elusive, but freedom from unhappiness is attainable now, by facing what is rather than making up stories about it.

there is nothing you can do, face what is and say, "Well, right now, this is how it is. I can either accept it, or make myself miserable." The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral, which always is as it is. There is the situation or the fact and here are my thoughts about it. Instead of making up stories, stay with the facts.

For example, "I am ruined" is a story. It limits you and prevents you from taking effective action. "I have 50 cents left in my bank account" is a fact. Facing facts is always empowering. Be aware that what you think, to a large extent, creates the emotions that you feel. See the link between your thinking and your emotions. Rather than being your thoughts and emotions, be the awareness behind them.

Don't seek happiness. If you seek it, you won't find it because seeking is the antithesis of happiness. Happiness is ever elusive, but freedom from unhappiness is attainable now, by facing what is rather than making up stories about it. Unhappiness covers up your natural state of well-being and inner peace, the source of true happiness.

Parenthood: role or function?

Many adults play roles when they speak to young children. They use silly words and sounds. They talk down to the child. They don't treat the child as an equal. The fact that you temporarily know more or that you are bigger does not mean the child is not your equal. The majority of adults, at some point in their lives, find themselves being a parent, one of the most universal roles. The all-important question is: Are you able to fulfill the function of being a parent and fulfill it well, without identifying with that function, that is, without it becoming a role?

Part of the necessary function of being a parent is looking after the needs of the child, preventing the child from getting into danger and, at times, telling the child what to do and not to do. When being a parent becomes an identity, however, when your sense of self is entirely or largely derived from it, the function easily becomes overemphasized, exaggerated and takes you over.

Giving children what they need becomes excessive and turns into spoiling; preventing them from getting into danger becomes overprotectiveness and interferes with their need to explore the world and try things out for themselves. Telling children what to do or not to do becomes controlling, overbearing. What is more, the role-playing identity remains in place long after the need for those particular functions has passed.

Excerpted from **A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose** by Eckhart Tolle. Reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc. Copyright © Eckhart Tolle, 2005.

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The gift of sight

What would you miss if you were blind? For the 314 million people in the world living with low vision and blindness, simple pleasures like walking unaided or seeing the faces of loved ones are just dreams.

The good news is that 80% of blindness is preventable or treatable, often with a pair of prescription glasses or a 15-minute cataract surgery costing about $50. Seva Canada (www.seva.ca), a Vancouver-based international eye care charity, has been working for almost 30 years to restore sight and prevent blindness in some of the poorest regions of the developing world including Nepal, Tibet, India, Tanzania, Guatemala, Cambodia and Egypt.

Fidelia Silverste Fajardo, Guatemala

But people don't go blind by the millions. They go blind one personal tragedy at a time. Here are two stories of people who were once blind and who received the gift of sight thanks to Seva's donors.

In Guatemala, an elderly woman named Fidelia Silverste Fajardo was gradually losing her sight because of cataracts, the clouding of the eye's natural lens. It was bad enough that she could no longer cook, clean and contribute to her family, but when her cataracts worsened she couldn't see to walk. One day she fell and broke both her hips and was confined to a wheelchair.

Blind and helpless, Fidelia felt her life was over and she was ashamed of being a terrible burden to her family. The family was sliding deeper into poverty because someone had to stay home from work to care for her.

Then her family heard about the Seva-sponsored eye care program and she had cataract surgery on both eyes. After the second surgery she told the doctors, "I am so happy that I can see again and little by little I am able to walk. I am able to cook and serve my family. I thank you so much and do not know how to thank you. May God bless you for helping me!"

In Nepal, a 14-year-old girl named Ram Kumari Tamang was facing an uncertain future. She is the youngest of five children and her mother passed away when she was only five-years-old. Up to grade three, she was one of the smartest people in her class. But then things started going wrong. She failed grades four, six and eight. Her family thought she must have a low IQ and they resolved to pull her out of school.

(L) Pembi Sherpa. (R) Ram Kumari Tamang (Nepal)

The real problem was that Ram Kumari couldn't see. Without eye care, her future would fade away along with her vision. After hearing on the radio about a Seva eye camp in her remote mountain region of Nepal, she asked her family to take her there. She was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes. The day after her eye surgeries, her vision had improved from 20/200 to 20/40.

Ram Kumari was delighted. She said that from now on she would be first in her class. She wanted to have her photo taken with Pembi Sherpa, another young girl who also received sight-restoring cataract surgery at the Seva eye camp. The girls became good friends after seeing each other at the eye camp. Both girls can now return to school and have brighter futures.

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Finding our true purpose

A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer; it sings because it has a song. – *Maya Angelou*

Often, my clients who are on a path of conscious growth struggle around the idea of their purpose. They are living their lives reasonably successfully, but they still feel there is something more – something meaningful – that they should be doing with their lives.

When I question further, they say they have absolutely no idea what it could be and they don't know how to go about finding it. It is as though the answer is out there somewhere waiting to be discovered. What they do know is that what they are currently doing in life does not feel like their true purpose.

True purpose might imply something that we were meant to do. This suggests an agenda, perhaps set by our own souls before we came here. Depending on our spiritual beliefs, it might be what God intended for us. Unfortunately, we can't do a Google search or look in the back of a book for the answer.

The problem for many is that they look out into the world at all the options, trying to find one that seems to fit. They are using their head, their logical mind to try and figure it out. True purpose, however, is more about the heart and soul than it is about the head. Living in the Western world, we have learned to let the head take the lead and often overrule the heart or the soul's whisperings, which we assume, belong to the realm of dreams or the impractical.

Logical thinking often takes us along the path of living up to cultural norms or the expectations of others. Most people have lived their entire lives this way; it is hard not to. They are unaccustomed to giving credence to the nudgings of heart and soul. The sense that one is not living one's purpose is about not having truly charted our own path. Yes, we made our own decisions, but we likely eliminated many possibilities before they even made it to the drawing board.

Finding our purpose is a journey that involves going within, rather than looking outside of ourselves. It can begin by becoming aware of which activities and people seem to nourish and energize us and which seem to drain us. It can involve contemplating the things that make us the happiest and which things we have always dreamed of doing but for one reason or another dismissed as impossible.

It is about living at least part of our lives intuitively – following the gut, going with things because a part of us is saying "yes." It is also about being authentic. This means learning to say what we really think and not doing things out of a sense of obligation rather than true desire. It is about honouring ourselves.

As we begin to live this way, we will take pathways that will lead us to new people, new activities and new possibilities. This, in itself, is living our purpose for part of our purpose is to evolve into the unique beings that we are. Our lives become the creative expression of our spirit. If, in the process, we find that *one* thing to which we passionately devote our lives, then it is for us, but it does not have to be for everyone. Simply being true to ourselves is purpose enough.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For more of Gwen's articles and information about her books, **Self Care** CDs and the new **Creating Healthy Relationships** series, visit www.gwen.ca. See display ad this issue.

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All the NEWS that's 'print to fit'

Years ago, when I first started freelance writing, I pitched a story idea to a local entertainment weekly. The editor asked me what my "angle" was. I confessed I didn't have an angle and I didn't think I'd have one until I researched the story in depth. A while later, I pitched another story idea (both long since forgotten) to another editor who asked what my angle was. I naively gave the same response and received the same counter-response. It was: "Thanks for your interest, goodbye." It was all part of my learning curve as a struggling writer.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines objectivity as "unrealistic impartiality, absence/lack of bias, absence/lack of prejudice, fairness, fair-mindedness, neutrality, even-handedness, justice, open-mindedness, disinterest, detachment, dispassion, neutrality." It has long been the gold standard in print and broadcast journalism. But sometimes it looks closer to fool's gold.

Over the past few decades, objectivity has been smacked around by a succession of postmodernist philosophers, who insist there is no one-to-one correspondence between reality and text. The more extreme position in this school of thought is that truth itself is merely a function of power relations, without any independent meaning. At the other end of the spectrum, there's the idea that the daily news is a reliable record of the world, at least of the parts of the world worth knowing. "All the news that's fit to print," as the *New York Times* puts it.

Few us think of the daily's front page as a God's eye view of the world, any more than we think of a building fire or a stabbing as a groundbreaking broadcast item. The decision to choose a particular story for the front page, or as lead-in item in the evening news, is a value judgment. Somebody else has decided what's most important to you, and what isn't. This is why MIT media critic Noam Chomsky once said his greatest weapon was a pair of scissors. He used them to cut marginalized, but telling, items from the back pages of the newspaper.

Just as law making has been compared to sausage making (you really don't want to see how it's done), newsroom activity is shaped by office politics, groupthink and the gravitational pull from the advertising department. And all this is floating around in an unspoken soup of cultural biases. For the junior reporter straining for that big brass ring with 'Objectivity' embossed on it, it makes for a quest worthy of Frodo.

There are many excellent journalists around, even though real investigative reporting is thin on the ground these days. And there are many valuable skills taught in journalism schools: editing, fact checking, proper documentation, verification through multiple sources and how to limbo under the libel bar. Beyond these "objective" skills, the issue of the larger social purpose of journalism is left to others to figure out. Is it about "comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable" or pleasing advertisers and condescending to readers? Many j-schools now offer classes in public relations as part of their curriculum, merging "serious" journalism with the dark arts of corporate persuasion.

> A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.

A friend who graduated with a university degree in communications put it best. She and her fellow classmates were exposed to the sociology of knowledge, the history of the free press and the thinking of media critics like Chomsky. Journalism students were not. The communications students regarded them as "grunts," in her words.

There's a telling quote from James Winter's 1997 book *Democracy's Oxygen: How Corporations Control the News.* Nicholas Johnson, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission in the US, tells a story "of a reporter who first comes up with an investigative story idea, writes it up and submits it to the editor and is told the story is not going to run. He wonders why, but the next time he is cautious enough to check with the editor first. He is told by the editor that it would be better not to write that story. The third time he thinks of an investigative story idea but doesn't bother the editor with it because he knows it's silly. The fourth time he doesn't even think of the idea anymore." This is self-censorship in action.

The question isn't whether or not journalism has a subjective element. The question is what kind of subjectivity is brought to the table? One of our great Canadian newspapers recently featured contributions from high school students. I was unknowingly thumbing through this edition when I came across a well-researched profile of a young homeless man. The article was noteworthy for the searching and heartfelt voice of its author. It was credited to a Grade 11 student, who presumably had yet to polish her skills in j-school. Yet the newsroom staff could have profitably spent their time studying her report. Rarely do professional media outlets consciously falsify information. Instead, they pass over information that doesn't fit into the worldview of the executive suite. The crimes are more of omission than commission. As we all now know, it's possible for the media to conjure up a completely misleading picture of the world from what writer Gore Vidal called "the agreed-upon facts."

In the build-up to the Iraq war in 2003, North American reporters and commentators became ventriloquist dummies to the White House, parroting the neocon claims about Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction." In effect, "objective" journalists helped the war makers construct an alternative reality from Bizarro world. And most of the audience bought the mesmerizing narratives of the "war on terror" wholesale.

Not incidentally, one of the principal garbage chutes for the US government's fabricated information was Judith Miller of the *New York Times*. The paper's motto could just as easily have been, "All the news that's print to fit."

All journalistic information – that is, who did or said what when – is embedded in a network of social relations. As a species, we are gossips at heart. Consider, for example, that all-important perk of serious journalism: access. By getting first access to politicians, policy makers and celebrities, you have a chance to get a "scoop." You may agree to what's on and off the record, but if you publicly express too much skepticism about your sources or their information, later opportunities for access may escape like Houdini. This is why mainstream reporters completely missed out on the warning signs of the 2008 economic meltdown. In the words of writer Chris Hedges, business reporters were "out having lunch with Robert Rubin," the Clinton-era apparatchik who helped spawn the system that ended up eating itself.

Documentary filmmaker Charles Ferguson didn't care as much about ongoing access to Wall Street silverbacks. In his recent film on the 2008 financial meltdown, *Inside Job*, he managed to buttonhole a number of high-level officials from US investment

OBJECTIVITY VS. SUBJECTIVITY IN THE JOURNALISM SPIN

banks and the Federal Reserve. With probing questions – and rising agitation from his interview subjects – he managed to get them to hang themselves, and their institutions, with their own words. But this was a one-shot deal. It's safe to say Ferguson will never make another film about financial matters, at least not one with the participation of any big names.

Call it advocacy journalism, or even gotcha journalism, but *Inside Job* gave a coherent picture of the high-level deceit that led millions of innocent homeowners down the garden path of mortgage refinancing and into ruinous foreclosure. Ferguson didn't simply do a 'he-said, she-said' report that left viewers confused as to who was telling the truth. He had a passion for making a complicated story transparent.

"The very notion that, on any given story, all you have to do is report what both sides say and you've done a fine job of objective journalism debilitates the press," wrote the late Molly Ivins, a fierce syndicated columnist from Texas. "There is no such thing as objectivity, and the truth, that slippery little bugger, has the oddest habit of being way to hell off on one side or the other: it seldom nestles neatly halfway between any two opposing points of view. The smug complacency of much of the press – I have heard many an editor say, 'Well, we're being attacked by both sides so we must be right' – stems from the curious notion that if you get a quote from both sides, preferably in an official position, you've done the job. In the first place, most stories aren't two-sided, they're 17-sided at least. In the second place, it's of no help to either the readers or the truth to quote one side saying, 'Cat,' and the other side saying 'Dog,' while the truth is there's an elephant crashing around out there in the bushes."

Former *New York Times* war correspondent Christopher Hedges, now *persona non grata* with the *Times* for giving an antiwar speech, expressed a similar viewpoint in an article at Truthdig.com. "Reporters who witness the worst of human suffering and return to newsrooms angry see their compassion washed out or severely muted by the layers of editors who stand between the reporter and the reader. The creed of objectivity and balance, formulated at the beginning of the 19th century by newspaper owners to generate greater profits from advertisers, disarms and cripples the press."

Consider the editorial debate over the WikiLeaks cables and the continuing editorial question: "Are the leaks good for democracy?" Wrong question. It should be, are the leaks good for the news? And isn't news – *real* news, not stories about celebrity meltdown or rewritten press releases – good for democracy? Whatever you think of Julian Assange and his leaks of diplomatic cables, he is holding up a mirror to the world – something that journalism was once expected to do, before it went off on circulation suicide missions with feature stories about Justin Bieber and Lady GaGa.

But now we have the Internet, right? With RSS feeds and free news portals on the Internet, millions of readers are abandoning print to become their own editorial gatekeepers. But before we applaud the brave new world of "citizen journalism," we should be aware of the tradeoffs. As yet, there is no Internet revenue model that will pay a living wage to frontline "content providers," let alone fly a working journalist to Peshawar for firsthand reporting. In the new media world, only the aggregators like *Huffington Post* are making a go of it – and that's because their Internet traffic depends on content from traditional news sources, which are dying off like houseflies on a frosty windowpane.

"A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes," said the Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a century before the digital world buried us in a tsunamai of infotainment. *Harper's* magazine has 21,000 readers by subscription and circulation. *Time* magazine has three million readers. In contrast, Facebook has 600 million members. New media's corporate portals have reduced old media's print-based operations to the status of lemonade stands.

None of this bodes well for the so-called objectivity of the press. But when you consider all the layers of cultural conditioning, confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance and other psychological quirks that make us hairless primates tick, it's always been a messy business trying to figure out the truth with a lower-case t. And it applies as much, if not more, to reporting in the Internet age. Thankfully, the human irrational streak is often countered by that mysterious divining rod of consciousness, intuition. It's a bullshit beeper that spans the objective and subjective realms.

Human beings aren't robots reporting from an emotion-scrubbed perspective. It takes the whole organism – brains, heart and guts – to ferret out the "facts" and to present them with something resembling conviction. All the wet, sticky stuff of the subjective sphere, in other words. To paraphrase Einstein, subjectivity without objectivity is blind. Objectivity without subjectivity is lame.

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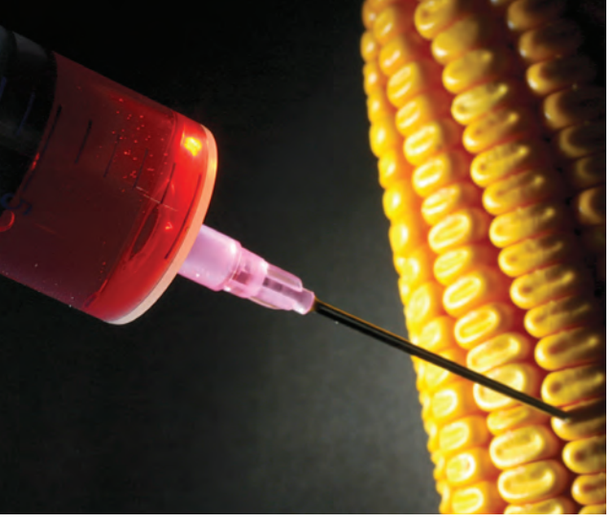

A win for Bill C-474

NDP secures an extended debate on GE crops in early January

For the first time, Parliament is engaged in a real debate over the negative impacts of genetically engineered (GE) food and crops (also known as genetically modified, GM). This debate is thanks to the one-line Private Members Bill C-474, which would require "an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted."

Despite industry attempts to prevent the debate from happening in the first place and a successful move to shut down Agriculture Committee hearings on the Bill, Bill C-474 continues to force more debate in both the House of Commons and the Agriculture Committee.

The Bill identifies the core problem of GE crops being approved in Canada despite predicted negative economic impacts. GE contamination translates into economic costs borne by farmers, especially when GE crops are introduced without also being approved in our major export markets. However, these economic risks are not considered before GE crops are approved. If Bill C-474 passes, it will likely prevent the planting of crops that we know will cause economic chaos, such as GE alfalfa and wheat.

Kelvin Einarson, director and secretary treasurer of the Manitoba Forage Seed Association, spoke at the Agriculture Committee hearings in June, stating, "Bill C-474 is the first step in offering some protection in the future for Canadian family farms. Market acceptance must be made part of the evaluation process and incorporated into the Seeds Regulation Act."

Introduced by Alex Atamanenko, NDP Agriculture Critic and MP for BC Southern Interior, C-474 is the first Private Members Bill on genetic engineering to get this far in the Parliamentary process. The fight over the Bill is happening at the exact time the struggle to stop GE alfalfa is reaching a critical stage. The Bill could be voted on in early February, at the same time GE alfalfa could be approved in the US.

The New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois are strong supporters of the Bill. The Conservative Party, however, despite depending upon a rural constituent base, is solidly pro-GE and is actively opposing the Bill. If Bill C-474 dies, it will be because the Liberal Party is not willing to support it and risk the ire of the biotech industry. Regardless of what happens to the Bill itself, the debate has exposed MPs to evidence of harm caused by GE crops and strong concern from voters.

The first big victory in the life of Bill C-474 was a vote in the House of Commons in April when a majority of MPs voted in favour of the Bill, sending it on to the Agriculture Committee for study. The biotechnology industry lobbied hard to stop this debate from even taking place so this vote was a victory for democracy. The House of Commons Agriculture Committee held hearings on Bill C-474 in June and heard critical testimony from alfalfa growers.

GM crisis for organics

Alfalfa growers do not need nor want GM alfalfa and have been trying to stop it for at least five years. The introduction of Monsanto's GE herbicide tolerant (Roundup Ready) alfalfa would have serious negative impacts on many different types of farmers and farming systems, both conventional and organic. Without Bill C-474, there is no mechanism to even ask the question of what the economic cost of introducing GE alfalfa will be. Because alfalfa is a perennial crop pollinated by bees, GE contamination is inevitable. Alfalfa is used as pasture and high-protein feed for animals like dairy cows, beef cattle, lambs and pigs and is also used to build up nutrients in the soil, making it particularly important for organic farming. If introduced, GE alfalfa would ruin export markets for alfalfa products and threaten the future of organic food and farming in North America.

GE alfalfa was actually approved in Canada in 2005, but it must go through one more small, easy step before it can be legally sold as seed. In the US, GE alfalfa is also currently illegal, although this could change as soon as the end of January. On December 16, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released its final Environmental Impact Statement on GE alfalfa and with classic anti-democratic timing, triggered a 30-day final public comment period starting on December 23. The US could decide to allow GE alfalfa before the spring, assuring contamination in Canada.

Protecting the biotech industry

After the powerful testimony of alfalfa growers against GE alfalfa, and in support of Bill C-474, the biotech industry succeeded in shutting down the Agriculture Committee hearings. On October 27, a procedural motion to extend Committee hearings on Bill C-474 was defeated by the Conservatives and Liberals. This decision to abruptly end the hearings resulted in scheduled Committee witnesses, including National Farmers Union President Terry Boehm, being turned away from Parliament Hill on the morning of October 28. Boehm, a canola farmer, had travelled, on a ticket paid for by the Committee, from Saskatchewan at harvest time to testify in support of the Bill. The motion to extend the hearings was defeated by just five votes because too few Liberals were in the House at the time.

Public pressure to support the Bill has been so strong, however, that, while escaping more hearings on the Bill, the Liberals and Conservatives took action so they could tell constituents they were still examining the controversial issue. They introduced a joint motion to start a new study on biotechnology: "That the Standing Committee on Agriculture & Agri-food conduct a study on the status of the Canadian biotechnology sector, in which it travels to the universities across Canada where this technology is primarily being undertaken, and that it recommend, where necessary, legislative policy and regulatory changes in order to foster an innovative and fertile biotechnology industry in Canada."

The study is clearly not designed to ask farmers for their views but will instead provide the industry a public relations platform. In early February, Committee members will travel to Calgary, Saskatoon, Guelph (ON), Quebec, Charlottetown (PEI) and Truro (NS). It is possible that Bill C-474 could be debated and voted on in the House of Commons while Agriculture Committee members are on the road listening to pro-GE researchers tell them how they can support the biotechnology industry.

A win for democracy

In a surprise move on December 1 in the House of Commons, the New Democratic Party used an obscure rule to secure an extended debate on Bill C-474, of up to five hours for early in 2011. In our 15-year history with GE crops, a five-hour debate in the House of Commons on the issue is unprecedented. Now, every MP will have an opportunity to speak to the issue. "This is a great chance for farmers to be heard. Organic, non-GE and conventional farmers will all now have a fair opportunity to voice their urgent concerns," said Saskatchewan organic grain farmer Arnold Taylor.

Even if the Bill is not passed, the debate and the public pressure around it has been a huge victory for democracy. The Bill has finally forced the Liberal Party to acknowledge that there is a problem that needs to be dealt with. As Wayne Easter, Liberal Agriculture Critic said in the House on December 1, there is a serious concern that I think Parliament or Agriculture Canada or someone, certainly, has to address; that is… that there is potential risk in the alfalfa industry by the introduction of GMO, genetically engineered seeds. It would be the same in terms of the wheat industry, over a slightly longer term."

The question now is, will the Liberal Party be part of the solution? The Liberals might vote down Bill C-474, but they have not brought forward any other concrete proposal. Who in our government – Parliament or Agriculture Canada or someone – will take the necessary leadership to actually stop harmful GE crops?

Lucy Sharratt is the Coordinator for the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. Take action on Bill C474 at www.cban.ca/474

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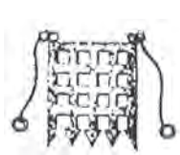

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Fraser River Indigenous Nations unite in opposition to Enbridge Pipeline Project

The proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline is dead in the water: the waters of the Fraser River. Enbridge's CEO, Pat Daniel, has been telling business groups that his pipeline has the support of "many" First Nations. We've got news for him. First Nations from the headwaters of the Fraser in the north all the way to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean are refusing to allow the Enbridge Pipeline through our shared watershed. On December 2, a historic alliance of over 60 of our Indigenous Nations in the Fraser River watershed declared, with one voice, that according to our ancestral laws:

"We will not allow the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, or similar Tar Sands projects, to cross our lands, territories and watersheds, or the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon."

By using our laws to ban the transportation of crude oil through our territories, we join our sisters and brothers of the Coastal First Nations, who banned crude oil pipelines and tankers from their territories just last March.

Far from Enbridge gaining support, it is the Indigenous Nations opposition to the pipeline that is growing. Enbridge talks about its protocol agreements with 30 First Nations as evidence of support for the project. In fact, Enbridge's public documents show that these agreements simply "establish the ground rules and points of contact for discussion on all aspects of the Northern Gateway project that might affect or involve First Nations and Métis communities." These agreements merely provide some funding so cash-strapped bands can review the thousands of pages of Enbridge's application, and they expire. They do not indicate support for the project.

We say to Enbridge: Our lands and waters are not for sale, not at any price. We want no part of your project and your offers of equity are worthless to us.

No Indigenous Nation in BC or Alberta has expressed support for these crude oil pipelines and tankers. This is with good reason: Oil spills are inevitable. Enbridge says it had 89 pipeline spills last year and this year it had devastating spills in Michigan and Illinois. Pipelines spill oil all the time. We can't trust Enbridge's claims to keep our waters safe.

We can't tolerate an oil spill into our rivers and territories. A clean and healthy Fraser River system is the lifeblood of our peoples. We rely on the fish, the water and our plants and animals for our livelihoods and our survival. An oil spill would kill our fish, take the food off our tables and ruin individuals' and families' lives. We saw in the Gulf of Mexico this year how oil spills devastate communities. These pipelines and tankers put everyone in BC at risk.

In light of these unavoidable risks to our people's futures, we reject Pat Daniel's delusional suggestion that First Nations will be "pretty happy" (*Calgary Herald*, Dec 1, 2010) with the offer of an equity share in their project. We say to Enbridge: Our lands and waters are not for sale, not at any price. We want no part of your project and your offers of equity are worthless to us when compared to the importance of keeping our lands and waters free of crude oil spills. Instead, spend your money to fix communities already hurt by Enbridge oil spills.

Our nations are unified in our stance and we're not alone. The Union of BC Municipalities overwhelmingly adopted a motion opposing tankers on the north coast of BC. On December 7, a majority of Canada's MPs from every part of the country voted for an NDP motion calling for a legislative ban on oil tankers on the Pacific North Coast. The Liberals have now proposed legislation to achieve that ban. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike are uniting to protect our rivers and coastline in an unprecedented way.

We have never given up our Title, Rights and legal authority over our lands. The National Energy Board process to review the Enbridge project fails to respect this authority. However, as the Nations that govern our territories in the Fraser basin, we have a legal and moral responsibility to protect everyone from the harms that are sure to result if this pipeline is built. Our laws do not permit us to stand by and allow these oil pipelines to enter our shared Fraser River watershed.

The Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline is dead in the water – because we need to keep our waters living.

Photo by Neil Louie www.nplphotography.com

Chief Larry Nooski of Nadleh Whut'en and **Chief Jackie Thomas** of Saik'uz are members of the Yinka Dene Alliance whose territories are on the Enbridge pipeline route. **Chief Art Adolph** represents the Xaxli'p community of the St'át'imc Nation, which has territories in the southern part of the Fraser watershed. These nations convened the "Save the Fraser Gathering of Nations" that produced this unprecedented declaration.

Science Matters David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

Learning from our elders

As I approach my 75th birthday, I find myself often thinking about mortality. I'm in the last part of my life and that's reality. This is the time when we must fulfill our most important duty: to reflect on a lifetime and then sift through the detritus of experience, observation and thought in order to winnow out lessons to pass on to coming generations.

The most influential elders in my life were my parents. Although they were in their 30s and 40s when I was a child, they seemed much older and wiser. They taught me lessons that have guided me and that I have tried to pass on to my children: "Respect your elders." They weren't referring to themselves but to older people, who by virtue of having lived a life, deserved respect.

"You are what you do, not what you say." With today's barrage of information, spin and propaganda from politicians and corporations, it's important to look at a record of action rather than be deceived or confused by words.

"If you want everyone to like you, you will not stand for anything." When I was in high school, I was elected president of the student body. I told my dad that I wanted everyone to like me. He told me that no matter what one stands up for, there would always be those who disagree with you.

Elders remember a world that changed more slowly, when "disposable" was not a description of products, when sharing, reusing and recycling were simply the way we lived.

"Whatever you do, whether it's washing dishes, scrubbing floors, or working at a job, throw yourself into it with all your energy." I have learned that when I do a half-hearted job, I get a half-hearted experience.

My parents lived through the Great Depression, which shaped their values and outlook. They taught me those values: "Save some for tomorrow." This was a recurring theme and, of course, a value held by any true conservative "Live within your means." This meant that if you didn't have the money to buy something today, you saved until you could. This notion goes against today's easy access to credit, which encourages going into debt.

Perhaps, most importantly, they taught me that I had to work hard to earn money to buy necessities in life, but that I mustn't run after money as if having more than others would make me better or more important. I'm lucky to have arrived at a time in my life when I am freed from the encumbrances of making money, seeking fame and power and showing off. We elders have no hidden agenda and can speak the truth.

During the '80s and '90s when battles raged over forestry practices, one of my most formidable opponents was the CEO of a large forestry company. On retiring and being freed from the corporate game, he became a generous supporter of my foundation. Maybe someone should start a Retired Corporate CEOs and Presidents for the Environment. In First Nations communities, elders remain the bedrock of society. In conversations with First Nations people, I am struck by how often they tell me, "The elders say..." or "I have to ask the elders."

In today's youth-obsessed world of rapid technological developments, we too often marginalize elders when their experience is most important. Elders remember a world that changed more slowly, when "disposable" was not a description of products, when sharing, reusing and recycling were simply the way we lived. Elders remember a time when family and social activities were the central focus of life, not shopping and owning stuff. Elders remind us that life can be rich and fulfilling without all the toys.

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Paul George

Federal Liberals and NDP fail to demand tanker ban on South Coast

Photos by Monika Marcovici

On Sunday October 17, environmentalists held one of the biggest rallies since the days of fighting to save the big trees in Carmanah Valley and Clayoquot Sound. The issue: the looming and escalating threat of a massive crude oil spill in Vancouver's inner harbour.

Everyone knows about the Exxon Valdez oil spill. When that tanker ran aground in 1989, it dumped nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil (about 350,000 barrels) that ravaged Alaska's Prince William Sound. The negative environmental, economic and social effects of that catastrophic spill are still being felt today, more than 20 years later.

Vancouver, with all its natural beauty, tourism economy and world-class quality of life, is under the same threat. Two large tankers a week – carrying between 500,000 to 700,000 barrels of tar sands crude oil – leave Vancouver's inner harbour. They pass under two bridges at the Second Narrows, identified as the riskiest oil tanker passage in the world, then travel past Stanley Park and through the Gulf Islands, bound for California and China.

Kinder Morgan, which owns the pipeline (formerly called the Trans Mountain Pipeline) that transports the crude oil from the Athabasca tar sands to its Westridge Terminal in the port of Vancouver, has plans to increase its pipeline capacity and increase the number of tankers to 10 per week. That's over 500 tankers a year, more than double the 225 tankers in the Kitimat oil port proposal. With every tanker, the risk of a catastrophic oil spill increases.

Vancouverites are justifiably upset. The October rally, organized by the new group "No Tanks," formed to respond to the tanker threat, along with Greenpeace and the Wilderness Committee, saw more than a thousand people gather in Stanley Park and more than a dozen small boats ply the waters near the seawall, to voice their opposition to crude oil tankers in Vancouver harbour.

The culmination of the rally was the presentation of a banner to politicians to take to the federal Conservative government with the demand for a ban on crude oil tankers on BC's *entire* coast.

Representatives of the City of Vancouver, the Federal Liberal Party, the Federal NDP and the yet-to-be-elected Green Party of Canada were invited to receive the banner. Vancouver Centre MP Hedy Fry was expected to be there, but was a "no show." Nathan Cullen, MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley, represented the federal NDP. Deputy Mayor Andrea Reimer represented Vancouver City Council. Adriane Carr, Deputy Leader of the Green Party of Canada and candidate for Vancouver Centre, represented the federal Greens.

Rex Weyler, co-founder of both Greenpeace and No Tanks, presented the banner (shown in photo) to the group. Neither Reimer, who said that the City has no jurisdiction, nor Cullen, would take possession of the banner so Carr stepped up to the plate and accepted the banner, promising to take it to Ottawa and contact the federal opposition parties to arrange a joint presentation to the Conservatives.

Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party of Canada, attempted to get the NDP, Liberal and Bloc leaders "on board" for a media presentation in the Parliamentary Press Gallery to present the banner and generate further publicity about the threat to Vancouver – the wanna-be-the-greenest city in the world, as well as to the Fraser – the world's greatest salmon river.

The federal NDP and Liberals dodged and weaved, not wanting to come out publicly saying they did not oppose tanker traffic on BC's south coast. In the end, the Green Party held the press conference in Ottawa on its own (see You Tube video of the press conference http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wdh96m0Mqa8)

The rule of the Parliamentary Press Gallery is "no banners allowed." Ms. Carr and Ms. May were only allowed to talk about it. Carr is still in possession of this historic banner and plans to make another attempt to deliver it directly to government.

Since then, Cullen presented a private member's bill in the House of Commons calling for a crude oil tanker ban on BC's north coast. In December, Liberal MP Joyce Murray did the same. But both bills only mention BC's north coast and thus leave Vancouver and BC's south coast vulnerable.

Carr vows to make this her main issue in seeking election as the Green MP for Vancouver Centre in the upcoming federal election.

Banner reads "No tankers on the Salish Sea".

Paul George is the founder of **Western Canada Wilderness Committee**. For more information, visit www.wilderness committee.org and www.notanks.org
Contact the Green Party of Canada, Vancouver office, at BCoffice@greenparty.ca See www.votecarr.ca Also see the article **Vancouver Targeted as Tar Sands Shipping Port** published in **Common Ground, November 2010 issue 231,** also available on our website at www.commonground.ca Click on Archive.

The year of innovation

In my January 2009 column, I encouraged readers to make opening up the media in Canada their 2010 resolution. I asserted that 2010 would be a pivotal year for communities working to open communication in Canada and beyond. And so here we are at the end of the year and it appears that, indeed, there is a growing community focused on openness, with the open Internet at its core.

Big Internet service providers such as Bell, Rogers, Shaw, Telus or Videotron plan to make Internet access more expensive by imposing usage-based billing (charging per byte). According to StopUBB.ca, this could cost Internet users $60 more per month starting this year.

For example, more than 22,000 people (and counting) have signed the Stop The Meter petition (http://openmedia.ca/meter), demonstrating widespread discontent with big telecom companies that are attempting to hogtie competing indie Internet service providers (ISPs) and make the Internet much more expensive to use.

What about 2011?

While the open media community will likely continue to gain momentum, I believe that, in 2011, innovation will take on an increasingly central role in defining the future of communications and society in general.

Here's the situation:

1. Big Internet service providers such as Bell, Rogers, Shaw, Telus or Videotron plan to make Internet access more expensive by imposing usage-based billing (charging per byte). According to StopUBB.ca, this could cost Internet users $60 more per month starting this year.
2. Many of these same providers continue to slow access to innovative online content and services. Most recently, Rogers' customers reported problems accessing content after the company experimented with its traffic-slowing technology.
3. Major Internet service providers are investing in and experimenting with a new, more controlled version of the Internet, delivered through TV and mobile devices.

What this amounts to is a campaign to make the Internet more expensive and circumscribed while providers experiment with their "managed" TV/mobile Internet services. The market is being structured so that, either way, the big telecom companies win. They either successfully corral us into their TV version of the Internet, make the Internet more expensive and restricted, or both.

What does this have to do with innovation?

The main challenge with initiatives designed to preserve and build on the open Internet is that people take the Internet for granted. This is where online innovators play an essential role.

Big telecom companies will make deals with Facebook and other big players so that you'll find them on your Internet TV. However, you might have trouble finding the small, independent online services like those that carry this column or the new crowd-sourced journalism project OpenFile, CBC Radio 3 and innovative services like HootSuite.

Innovation takes centre stage

Canadians need to understand the value of online innovation. Innovators in Canada need to be, well, more innovative. They need to be *de facto* champions of openness – just as many of their predecessors have been.

Canadians will step up to defend the open Internet more whole-heartedly when its value is more clearly demonstrated. Online innovators and the community that support them need to capture more audience from big media.

If Canadians *en masse* are more deeply engaged by, and fall in love with, innovative online services and content, they will be better equipped to defend the open Internet when needed. More importantly, Canadians will actually notice that "Internet" services provided on TV don't include their favourite online services.

Innovation isn't just an awesome thing to do; it has played and will increasingly continue to play an essential role in ensuring that the revolution unfolding in communication continues.

Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for OpenMedia.ca. He has written for The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times and Adbusters.
steve@openmedia.ca, www.FacebookSteve.com, www.SteveOnTwitter.com

Canadian access to natural health products threatened

NEWS: Under the European Parliament law of 2004, many herbal and natural medicines including Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicines will become illegal on April 1, 2011

www.anh-europe.org

Two citizen groups in Canada put out the call to protect our herbal and natural products.

First, the Natural Health Products Protection Association (NHPPA) has developed a three-part plan to solve the current regulatory crisis in Canada. The plan includes:

1. Seek a suspension of the Current NHP Regulations.
2. Start court proceedings to have the Natural Health Product Regulations declared unconstitutional.
3. Move to have the Charter of Health Freedom enacted to guarantee a reasonable legal environment for natural health products, and to prevent continued over-regulation of NHPs in the future.

The Charter of Health Freedom is a proposed legislation that gives Natural Health Products their own Act. It was developed specifically to protect natural health products (NHPs) and the Canadian consumers who use them. The Charter creates a completely separate category for NHPs; separate from the Drug category that they are currently a part of; under the old Food and Drug Act.

The proposed Charter of Health Freedom is a reminder to exercise the rights and freedoms we enjoy as Canadians. It is a change that meets today's greatly shifting values and ethics. It is about creating an evolution. It is about protecting our freedom. We need three million signatures from Coast to Coast to make sure that this charter gets the political attention is deserves. Each person should print out a petition sheet from www.charterofhealthfreedom.org and get 25 signatures along with a donation to support the coming legal challenges.

This is an exciting time in the field of natural medicine. The Charter of Health Freedom has the potential to set Canada apart as one of the most progressive countries in the world. The Charter envisions a health care system to be fully sustainable, culturally diverse and encompass natural, traditional and conventional medicine.

It works within the Government of Canada to provide the new law that works for everybody and protects today's Canadian public and our future generations.

Forever.

The Charter of Health Freedom offers an appropriate, healthy, beneficial, safe and well-rooted change for regulating the nation's natural health products industry; permanently. It proposes the definition and regulation of NHPs be elevated to a peer basis with Drugs.

www.nhppa.org

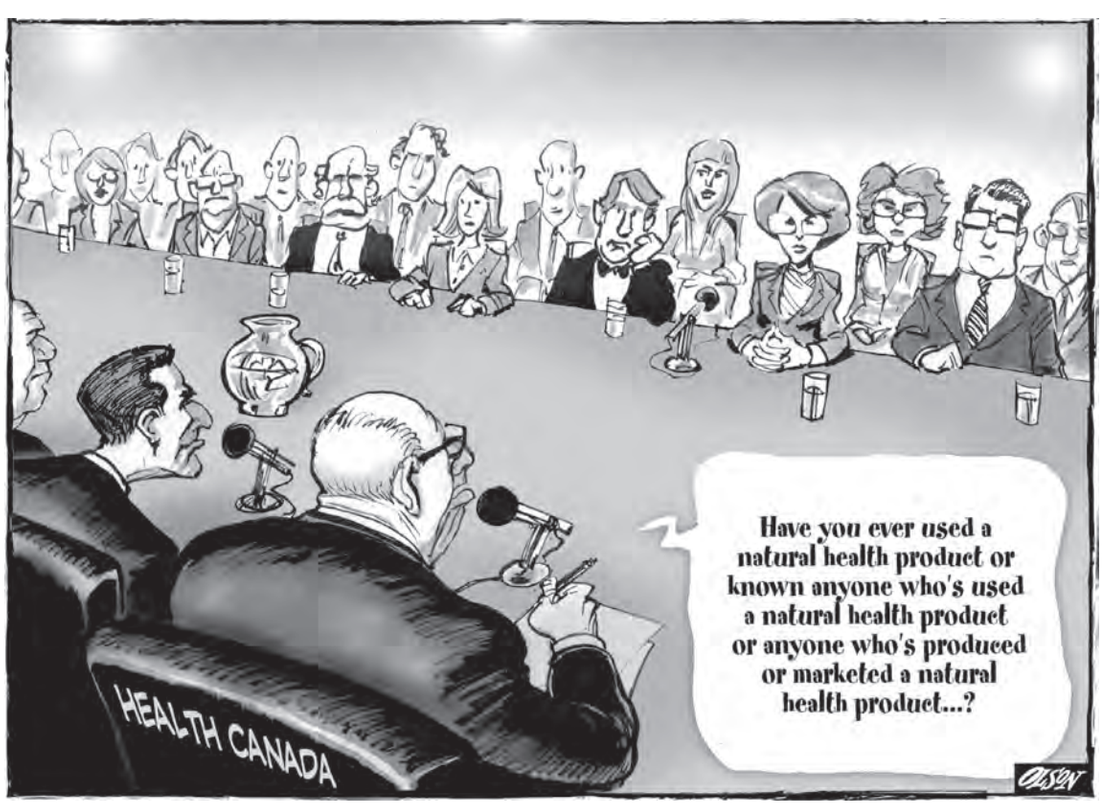
Secondly, the newly formed National Health Federation of Canada:

We the People and mothers of the children stand united to protect and provide only safe natural supplements and herbs for the children of today and the next seven generations. I speak as a Métis woman, mother and traditional healer for my people the First people of Turtle Island North America. Our government is attempting to take away herbal medicines that my ancestors have used for thousands of years. When I hear stories from my elder John Perry, aged 80, from the Gitxsan Nation (Hazelton BC) tell me that they cannot pick their beloved jack pine resin for colds and building up the immune system because Health Canada has threatened to arrest them, then we have a big problem!

Are we ready as a people? Please ask your self this question. We have a battle on our hands that has been going on for over 80 years against us. If we want to stop the monster it will take brave, strong, intelligent, passionate people to stand together against our government and police. Newly formed, National Health Federation Canada is uniting the industry while allying with the oldest health freedom fighting organization in the world. The National Health Federation had the foresight in the early 90's to apply for a seat at the Codex Alimentarius table. We are the only recognized NGO fighting for natural health freedoms against an international wash of propagandists and pencil pushers there. We have solutions but we also need your support. Please respond by giving of your time, your wallet, your ideas and your expertise to accomplish our goals.

Candace Hill, Co-Executive Director, National Health Federation Canada

www.thenhf.com


HEALTH CANADA
Have you ever used a natural health product or known anyone who's used a natural health product or anyone who's produced or marketed a natural health product...?
OLSEN

The Illusionist

Screenwriter-director Sylvain Chomet chose to go the old-school route when he adapted French comedy legend Jacques Tati's previously unmade script into an animated feature.

The creator of the wonderful The Triplets of Belleville harnessed a small army of animators to hand-draw much of the film, frame by frame. The production team had to hunt high and low for artists with the requisite drawing skills, computer generated images having made many such animators redundant or, at least, forced them underground.

The tortuous creative process paid off. *The Illusionist* (opening January 28) is a work of art you could hang on the wall. It's a lovely film to look at, with its vivid, romantic imagery of fifties Scotland, especially of Edinburgh where most of the action is set. There's a fluid movement to detail work, such as the movement of the magician's large, long-fingered hands or a crowd of people in a street.

The main drawback is that the story is slight and there's a sense that perhaps more substance could have been added to Tati's melancholy ode to the passing era of Music Hall entertainment.

At the centre of the film is an old Jacques Tati-esque illusionist who has discovered there is waning interest for his sleight of hand tricks in the new era of cinema and rock 'n' roll.

In his quest for greener pastures, the gangly, ageing magician quits Paris for London and ends up performing in Scotland's rugged Western Isles. In that windswept Scottish hinterland, evocatively rendered in misty, hilly landscapes, he is adopted by a naive, young Scottish girl who fully believes in his magical powers and follows him to Edinburgh. The two stay in a lowly hotel occupied by washed-up performers and as the old man struggles to please his number one fan, they learn about the shallowness of material trappings.

As with *The Triplets of Belleville*, there is little dialogue spoken. People do more grunting and muttering, barely comprehensibly in French, Gaelic or English. The story unwinds at a gentle pace with its subtle, nostalgic tone punctuated with the kind of amusing slapstick sequences you might find in old black-and-white comedies. There's a playfulness to the film, while the central theme – being careful about keeping up appearances – could be directed at both adults and kids.

But there's also a dark side to the vision that comes out in the visual humour involving a drunken Scotsman, namby-pamby rock stars, a gang of thuggish school kids and my favourite, the magician's demonic rabbit.

The original script was actually set in Prague, but Chomet was so impressed by the changing light in Edinburgh that he set up base in the Scottish capital to make the film. His team have done a brilliant job capturing the changing hues, the up-and-down landscape and the mystique of the UNESCO World Heritage city from the tumble of domes and steeples of the skyline to the smoke-fogged interiors of fifties train carriages. With its beautiful visuals and tender, melancholic centre, this gentle comedy is a rare family treat. Also, look out for the latest movie from Mike Leigh, Brit master of the soulful, melancholy movie. In *Another Year*, he explores suburban unhappiness (from January 21).

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary **You Never Bike Alone**. www.youneverbikealone.com. He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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Caravan World Rhythms 2011 season,includes Huun Huur Tu, Kiran Ahluwalia & Rhythms of Rajasthan, H'Sao, Monsen Namjoo and Salif Keita. Visit www.caravanbc.com

JAN 17
"You, me and the spp: trading democracy for the corporate rule" Vancouver Public Library, Screening begins 7 PM, Alice MacKay Room, Central Library, 350 W. Georgia St.

JAN 21
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM, $10; Course $350. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

JAN 22-23
Sheng Zhen Healing QiGong with world-renowned Master Li Jun Feng. Experience the QiGong of Unconditional Love! Beginners welcome. Coast Plaza Hotel downtown. 9:30-5pm. Pre-registration required. Info: www.easterncurrents.ca/seminars

JAN 27
Hidden in Plain Sight: UFOs and their Spiritual Mission. Free multi-media presentation. 7 pm. Roundhouse Community Centre (Pacific @ Davie) 604.983.0926

JAN 27
"Down on the Farm" – FarmFolk/CityFolk photographer Brian Harris talk & multimedia show highlighting the most compelling aspects of his past 4 years photographing and meeting with our local sustainable farmers. 7-9pm, Ferry Building Gallery, 1414 Argyle Avenue, West Vancouver. $13. Call to pre-register: 604-925-7270. Course# 769068. Limited seating.

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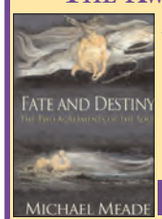

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SUNDAYS
SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria 604-277-1247 All Welcome www.sos.org

Centre for Spiritual Living:
Join us every Sunday @ 11 AM for spiritual teachings and great music at #08 1880 Triumph Street (at Victoria Drive), Vancouver. Info: 604-321-1225 www.cslvancouver.com

TUESDAYS

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Reflexology Student Clinic 6–10pm. One-hour sessions $20. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

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Ralph Nader

CULTURE

Wikimania and the First Amendment

Thomas Blanton, the esteemed director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University described Washington's hyper-reaction to Wikileaks' transmission of information to some major media in various countries as "Wikimania." In testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Blanton urged the Justice Department to cool it. Wikileaks and newspapers like *The New Yorks Times* and London's *Guardian*, he said, are publishers protected by the First Amendment. The disclosures are the first small installment of a predicted much larger forthcoming trove of non-public information from both governments and global corporations.

The mad dog, homicidal demands to destroy the leaders of Wikileaks by self-styled liberal Democrat and Fox commentator, Bob Beckel, the radio and cable howlers and some members of Congress, may be creating an atmosphere of panic at the politically sensitive Justice Department. Attorney General Eric Holder has made very prejudicial comments pursuant to his assertion that his lawyers considering how they may prosecute Julian Assange, the Wikileaks leader. Mr. Holder declared that both "the national security of the United States" and "the American people have been put at risk." This level of alarm was not shared by the public statements of defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of States Hillary Clinton who downplayed the impact of these disclosures. The Attorney General, who should be directing more of his resources to the corporate crime wave in all its financial, economic and hazardous manifestations, is putting himself in a bind.

If he goes after Wikileaks too broadly using the notorious Espionage Act of 1917 and other vague laws, how is he going to deal with The New York Times and other mass media that reported the disclosures? Consider what Harvard Law Professor Jack Goldsmith, who was head of the Office of Legal Counsel in George W. Bush's Justice Department just wrote:

"In *Obama's Wars*, Bob Woodward, with the obvious assistance of many top Obama administration officials, disclosed many details about top secret programs, code names, documents, meetings, and the like. I have a hard time squaring the anger the government is directing towards Wikileaks with its top officials openly violating classification rules and opportunistically revealing without authorization top secret information."

On the other hand, if Mr. Holder goes the narrow route to obtain an indictment of Mr. Assange, he will risk a public relations debacle by vindictively displaying prosecutorial abuse (i.e. fixing the law around the enforcement bias.) Double standards have no place in the Justice Department. Wikileaks is also creating anxiety in the corporate suites.

A cover story in the December 20, 2010 issue of *Forbes* magazine reports that early next year a large amount of embarrassing material will be sent to the media by Wikileaks about a major U.S. bank, followed by masses of exposé material on other global corporations.

Will these releases inform the people about very bad activities by drug, oil, financial and other companies along with corruption in various countries? If so, people may find this information useful. We can only imagine what sleazy or illegal things our government has been up to that have been covered up. Soon, people may reject the those who would censor Wikileaks. Many people do want to size up what's going on inside their government in their name and with their tax dollars.

Wasn't it Jefferson who said that "information is the currency of democracy" and that, given a choice between government and a free press, he'll take the latter? Secrecy – keeping the people and Congress in the dark – is the cancer eating at the vitals of democracy.

What is remarkable about all the official hullabaloo by government officials, who leak plenty themselves, is that there never is any indictment or prosecution of government big wigs who continually suppress facts and knowledge in order to carry out very devastating actions like invading Iraq under false pretenses and covering up corporate contractors abuses. The morbid and corporate-indentured secrecy of government over the years has cost many American lives, sent Americans to illegal wars, bilked consumers of billions of dollars and harmed the safety and economic well-being of workers. As Cong. Ron Paul said on the House floor, why is the hostility directed at Assange, the publisher, and not at our government's failure to protect classified information? He asked his colleagues which events caused more deaths, "Lying us into war, or the release of the Wikileaks papers?"

Abridged from **Wikimania and the First Amendment**, The Nader Page, Dec. 20, 2010
www.nader.org/index.php?/archives/2234-Wikimania-and-the-First-Amendment.html

Mac McLaughlin

ZODIAC

StarWise JANUARY 2011

ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Career prospects are hot and if not you should make them so by being pro-active, not aggressive. If you are unsure as to which way to go, then continue to eliminate old, negative pathways. Soon enough, the new direction will manifest itself. Be ready.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
Spiritual changes take place, particularly if you are fed up with the grind. The universe is pleading with you to make the necessary changes that will bring peace of mind. All positive efforts bring excellent returns especially in the last half of the year.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
The journey deepens in many ways as you weigh up all that has come to pass. Inheritances and joint monies come into play, as do a few mysteries for you to solve. Career plans may shift suddenly and in your favour.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
It's all about relationships right now. Expressed another way, it is all about how you relate to others and how you allow others to relate to you. Power plays and powerful days unfold rapidly. Exciting opportunities for travel, education, publishing and spiritual enlightenment arise.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
A stitch in time saves nine. Follow your instincts, as they help you prepare for upcoming ventures. Health, proper diet and balance are the objectives that must be attained and maintained. It is time to organize and harmonize everything.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Romantic energies are strong as bonds deepen and new souls arrive. Business opportunities and joint ventures dovetail along with good times. Your relationship house is active meaning that new partnerships may develop and old relationships may change suddenly.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
The month may not start off with much of a bang, but things develop as the weeks unfold. New friendships pique your interest. It is a time of redesigning your plan to fit with present realities. Powerful and positive relationships are developing.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
Creative potential is high. Muster your courage and move forward. Popularity and magnetism draw all kinds of interesting souls your way. Keep the door open, especially on the romantic level. Business opportunities present themselves throughout the month. Others find you simply irresistible.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
You are the prophet or prophetess of the zodiac. Pay close attention to what comes through your consciousness these days as your internal wisdom is sending strong signals. You are probably right on the money intuitive-wise. Be bold, brave and fearless. Bring it on.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Big changes are in the wind. It is not time to dig in and resist; it is time to assist whatever is changing in your life. Powerful forces are at work. Fierce resistance, backlashes, collusions and backroom deals congeal into new realities.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
January starts off a little sluggish, but things pick up mid month. The Sun enters Aquarius on January 20 and accompanies Mars in your sign bringing courage, enthusiasm, action and attraction. You will feel emboldened, supported and cheered on by your colleagues.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
An energy shift takes place and you may be surprised with who shows up in your life now. All kinds of unusual people, even groups of people who share similar interests, manifest themselves. The stars tell of a time of wonderment and spiritual awakening.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising professional astrologer for more than 4 decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Canada's largest weekly magazine, the Georgia Straight, for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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Penticton Penticton Trade Centre
273 Power St., Penticton
Free Demo Fri, Jan 21, 2011, 7 - 9 pm
Level 1 class Sat & Sun, Jan 22 & 23, 2011
$525 incl. tax 1st time students, $315 for returning students

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